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CHAPTER IV

The Tent and its Furnishings

A Badawin tent or *bait al sha'ar* is made up of strips of black or brown coarse cloth known as *fale'ij* (plural: *fijdn*). These are woven from goats' hair or from sheep's wool, never from camel hair, so that the name "camel hair tents" is a misnomer. The length of each strip used, and the number of such strips, naturally depends on the importance and circumstances of the owner. An average shaikh, for instance, will have a tent of, say, six extra-broad strips, each seventy feet long and supported by four poles, while a poor man may have cheap narrow strips to his tent, each twenty-five feet long, with only two poles, possibly with one.

The true Badawin shaikh does not go in for bigger tents than the one described, as his movements from camp to camp would be hampered thereby. Among the leading Shaikhs of the 'Anizah and Northern Shammar, such as ibn Sha'alan, ibn Hathal, Ajil al Yarwaz and also among Arabian princes like the Al Sa'ud, the Shaikhs of Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, tents of enormous size are the fashion. These, however, are practically used only when the owners are going out for the spring months to certain standing camps, from which they will sally forth and hunt gazelle, or hawk *hubara*. They would never be used for migration purposes.

To return to the tent: the strips are all sewn together so as to form one long rectangular whole, and are then raised up on the tent poles (*'amudn*) and the sides stretched taut by means of tent ropes (*awadi*).

The tent is then divided, usually by two or three long and gaily decorated curtains, known as *ghdas* (pronounced *gdas*), which hang on the tent poles inside the tent to a height of some six feet from the ground. They have their ends attached to the roof at the back of the tent, and to the roof and the tent ropes on the open side respectively.

Each *ghas* has one of its ends especially gaily decorated (see drawing of

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283 search or on camel back; indeed, the *maghzal* would seem to be almost part of the *Badawiyah*. The method of spinning is as follows:

The spinner keeps the wool she is spinning under her right arm, or in her bosom, while with her left hand she prepares the wool to be spun some two feet in length, ties it to the lower end of the spindle pole, and threads it under the hook fixed to the top of the spindle head. Next she raises her left knee (she is sitting at the time) and, placing the lower end of the spindle pole on it, she sharply twists the spindle handle on her knee with an outward move of the palm of her hand. This causes it to spin sharply. Next moment she holds the spinning spindle aloft in her right hand by means of the wool. When this latter has got a sufficient twist on it, she winds the completed wool round the under-

286 side of the spindle head. The other most important article of the women's quarters is the hand loom (*sanu*) on which all the cloth parts of the tent are woven or replaced. Mother or daughter keeps the loom in constant action: they are never idle, these desert women. Treasures

415 such as money, coffee beans, cardamom, sugar, salt, silks and special holiday attire are kept by the housewife locked up in a small tin or wooden box. The key of this she always keeps on her person, and ties to a portion of her head veil or *milfa*. This key is one of the first things that catch the European's eye when talking to a Badawin woman.

Close to, but outside the women's quarters, and away from the guest compartment, lie the filled water-skins (*gurab*), which for coolness' sake are always placed on a thick mattress of *'arfaj* bush. Near these are kept:

(*a*) The small leather bucket and rope (*dalla*) for drawing water out of wells, with or without the cross-piece of wood in the centre to keep it open, and

(*b*) The large leather bucket or bath (*dawdi*) standing on its curved wooden legs, from which camels and sheep drink. Both *dalla* and *dawdi* are usually bought by the owner of the tent when he comes up to Kuwait or other town to do *mushilah*; in the same way he buys his goat water-skins which have to be renewed fairly frequently.

(*c*) The still larger camel water-skin or *rawi* for conveying water from wells that may be distant.

Last, but not least, the *mirjahah* (or stirrer) with goatskin hanging

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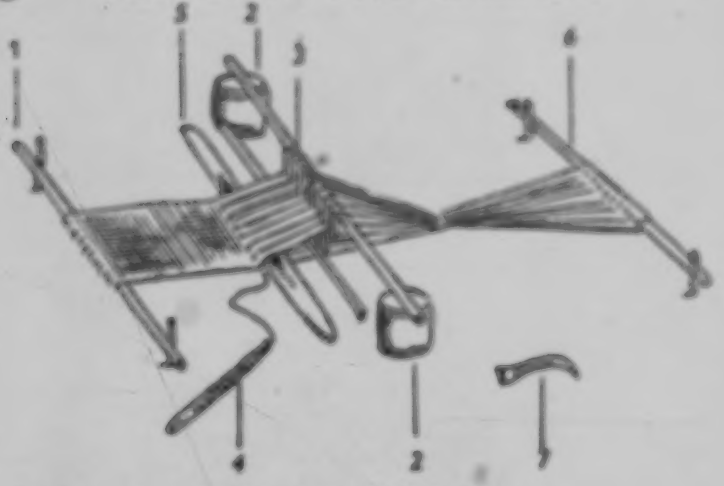
CAMEL CARRYING *DHALLA* ON THE MARCH

912. NATTU or MATTÁRIH (the Tent Hand-Loom)



1. *Al rus*—wooden rod holding the end of the threads.
2. *Marakib*—circular wooden supports holding up the *Mayar*.
3. *Mayar*—wooden rod holding up threads.
4. *Mirke*—shuttle.
5. *Mishiya* or *Nesko*—flat piece of wood for tightening up the threads of the woven fabric.
6. Piece of wood known as *Ga'ad*.
7. Gazelle horn, *Middrak* used for pulling down thread when weaving.

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used by the northern Badawin of Arabia, who carry their children on their shoulders or, when travelling, on their hips. The *miḍad* is not to be confused with the *haḥdo*.

Haḥdo—Baby's hammock for use inside tent. It is slung between two tent poles. Especially favoured in the north.

Hail—cardamom seeds for pounding in coffee.

Masmār—cloves, for putting in coffee.

Zafaran—saffron, for putting in tea and coffee.

Shiṣbar—hooks on each side of the *mahaw* to hang women's saddle-bags on.

THE LOOM—MATTÁRIB, NATTU OR SADU

The loom gear consists of seven pieces which altogether are known as *mattárik*.

(1) Piece of wood known as *ga'ak*.
(2) Shuttle known as *mirka*.
(3) Tightener known as *midiqqa*.
(4) Piece of wood holding up threads known as *minyar*.
(5) Circular wooden supports of *minyar*, known as *marakib*.
(6) Piece of wood holding ends of threads known as *al ras*.
(7) Gazelle horn for pulling down threads known as *middrak*.

SKIN CONTAINERS

These consist of:

(*a*) Water skins.
(*b*) Skin bags for storing *dehen*, coffee beans, dates, etc.

Under (*a*) we get the *rāwi*, the *thilaithi*, *mināh* and common *girba* (*jirba*).

Rāwi is the generic term for a water receptacle made out of a camel's skin.

Thilaithi is the name given to a water receptacle made out of one half of a camel skin doubled over and sewn together.

Mināh is a gigantic water receptacle made out of the two side skins of a camel sewn together. They are always very water-tight.

Qirba is an ordinary water skin made out of a whole sheep's or goat's skin which is peeled off the animal. The best and most lasting are made from goats' skins (males) and cost in the rough about Rs.2/8 each. Sheepskins do not last.